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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRESS SERVICE



Release - Immediate.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

July 3, 1931.

DROUGHT MORE SERIOUS THAN EVER FOR WATERFOWL -----

The serious decrease in the numbers of ducks noted throughout the United States during the shooting season of 1930-31 has caused general alarm among sportsmen, conservationists, and others interested in these valuable birds. For several years drought conditions in the breeding season of the birds have been unfavorable in the Northern Plains States and the Prairie Provinces of Canada, and officials of the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, are cooperating with Provincial and Dominion officials in Canada in studying actual conditions in the heart of the breeding range of some of our most important species of ducks. Preliminary results of the study now in progress indicate that this year's hatch of waterfowl will prove to be the smallest on record.

Canadian officials have reported recently that conditions in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan and parts of Manitoba are even less favorable for the breeding of wild fowl than they were last year. Recent rains in these areas can have no effect on this year's hatch of young ducks, because the peak of the breeding season had passed before the drought broke.

The serious drought conditions in the breeding grounds of the birds in the spring and early summer this year have accentuated the critical conditions

facing the waterfowl. Concern for the safety of the birds is increased by announcements from the Weather Bureau that the extreme deficiency in moisture that was experienced in 1930 followed similar conditions in the Northwest dating back to 1922.

Early this year Secretary Hyde, of the Department of Agriculture, recognizing the need for additional protection for wild fowl, authorized amendments to the regulations under the migratory-bird treaty act. These amendments will reduce the open seasons on waterfowl by two weeks in each of the States the coming fall and winter. He also adopted other restrictions to reduce the annual kill of wild fowl, including a reduction in the number of live-goose decoys that may hereafter be used at any gunning stand.

The Biological Survey has been observing the drought conditions in the breeding grounds of the wild fowl, particularly in the Plains States and Prairie Provinces. A large part of the wild fowl that spend the fall and winter months in the United States come from these areas. The results of the bureau's studies in cooperation with Canadian conservation officials will be awaited with interest, it is believed, by sportsmen and conservationists of both countries, since it is generally recognized that the conditions now confronting the wild fowl of North America are the most serious in our history.

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